SACRIFICE – The Making of a Muslim

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INTRODUCTION

Sacrifice is the theme to which I have been asked to address myself today.
What does the word mean? In a wider sense, 'sacrifice' means giving up things which are valued or desired. Those things may be tangible, countable like time, wealth or life, or intangible, immeasurable like feelings, attitudes, opinions or aspirations. They are given up for the sake of something that is more worthy or more important or more urgent. It is important to bear in mind, though, that primarily sacrifice means slaughter of animal or person as offering to God, and, hence, surrender to God of some possession.

It may be difficult to find in the Quranic vocabulary an exactly equivalent word for sacrifice, which also has as wide a literary usage. Nearest in meaning perhaps is nusuk: 'Say, my Prayer and my nusuk (sacrifice), my living and dying - all belong to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds' (al-An'am 6:162). 'Giving', however, is a fundamentally important motif in the Qur'an, stressed again and again. Iman (the faith), says the Qur'an in numerous places, must lead to spending 'of what We have provided them'. Along with Salat, 'giving' suffices to support, encompass and symbolize a life based on Iman. Provision, given by Allah, and to be given away by man, includes everything that man has, whether it be concrete or intangible. In one place in the Qur an, 'giving', along with taqwa (refraining from doing wrong) and tasdiq (accepting the truth), is all that is required to characterize a good life.

Surely your striving is to diverse ends. As for him who gives, is God-conscious and believes in the Truth - for him shall We make easy the path towards ease. But, as for him who is niggardly, behaves as if he is self-sufficient and denies the Truth - for him shall We make easy the path towards hardship (al-Layl 92: 4-10).

Sacrifice is the stuff of which good and successful, ordinary human lives are made. Without it, life will be devoid of peace, harmony and co-operation, full of conflict and discord, a prey to self-centredness, covetousness and immediate gratification of desires. Moreover, neither families nor communities can exist or achieve cohesiveness and strength without some sacrifice on the part of their members. Also, no human endeavour can, succeed in reaching its goal unless one sacrifices things valued or desired.

What is true of ordinary human life and endeavour, whatever its nature or importance, is certainly much more true of Islamic life. For, Islam simply means surrender to God of your whole being, not of just some possession. Put in the language of our present discourse Islamic life is a life of sacrifice par excellence. It entails a struggle that must be ceaselessly waged, to aetualize Islam, inwardly and outwardly, to make it a living reality.

Sacrifice is the nourishment without which the tiny seeds of Iman will not grow into mighty, leafy trees, providing shade and fruit to the countless caravans of mankind (Ibrahim 14:24-5). It must be the constant companion without which the path of Jihad cannot be traversed, for across it stretch endless deserts and high mountains (at-Tawbah 9:24). It is one of those keys without which the closed doors do not unlock (al-

Baqarah 2:214). It is true whether the path taken is personal - to reach spiritual and moral heights, or social - to cast life and society in the mould of Islam (surrender to One God). And it is true, when these two paths most desirably merge together. For the loftier the goal and more arduous the way, the greater the need to sacrifice, and sacrifice more and more.

Sacrifice, as you can now see, is a vast subject. Closely intertwined with it is the equally vast and important theme of trials and tribulations (ibtila' and mahnah) and of patience (sabr). One can dilate upon it without end, but a comprehensive treatment is not my aim. Many aspects of this well-known subject are quite familiar to you. Hence I would try to emphasize only such aspects as in my view deserve more attention, or are more relevant to our present concerns.

WHY SACRIFICE?

Islam: A Path of Struggle

First let us briefly look at an important question. Why must Islam be so emphatically linked with the idea of struggle? What has the one to do with the other? Cannot a person become a good Muslim without involving himself in a struggle that necessarily requires sacrifices? The answer is: No. And for very obvious reasons.

Islam is not merely the confession of a faith which is made once in a lifetime. The faith is of cosmic dimensions. It requires a radical reorientation of entire life and the world. The confession is not merely verbal; it is an act of witnessing which must transform life into a living and continuing testimony of faith. You enter Islam by saying shahadah (bearing witness). But you can live in Islam only by constantly doing shahadah (al-Baqarah 2:143, al_hajj 22:28). Doing shahadah will bring you in ceaseless confrontation with false gods inside you, and with those outside you. It will also require a ceaseless striving to reshape self and society so as to attest to your witnessing.

Being Muslim thus requires becoming Muslim. Becoming Muslim, after the seed of Iman has been sown in the heart, is a two-fold process: to summon one's own self and to summon mankind, to live under the sovereignty of One God alone. Both are inextricably linked together, both are to be taken up simultaneously.

Summoning mankind is not a passive call. It is an active, dynamic process, a movement. It must wage Jihad with all available resources so that all false claimants to absolute rule are dethroned, oppression and corruption are over powered, and justice is established among mankind. That is why the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, in the very early days of Makkan life, declared:

There were such people before you that a man would be seized and a pit would be dug for him in which he would be thrown, then a saw would be brought and placed over his head and he would be cut into two, and his flesh would be combed away from his bones by iron combs - still nothing would turn him away from his religion. By God, he will complete this mission until a rider will travel from San'a to Hadramawt and will have no fear but of God, and no worry but about a wolf that might harm his cattle (Bukhari).

The path of Islam cannot therefore be anything other than the path of struggle, and therefore sacrifice. Is not Islam, one might say, a gift of God? It surely is. Without His help and His enabling hand we can take no steps on the straight path (al-Sirat al-Mustaqim), the path of Islam. Yet only through our sincere intention and devoted striving can we deserve to receive this most precious gift, to retain it, to grow in it, to derive full benefit from it. The gift, no doubt, is given in His infinite mercy and kindness, but it is not unconditional If given whether desired or not and earned or not, it would have become cheap, valueless. That is why the Qur'an says that Allah "guides unto Himself him who turns unto Him" (al-Shura 42:13). Turning towards God requires both will and effort; it also entails turning away from all false gods besides God. It is a total change of direction, inner and outer. Progress, then, depends on striving: "Those who strive hard in Our way - surely We shall guide them onto Our paths" (al-Ankabut 29:68).

Struggle: The Indispensable Key

Such is the law of God (Sunnat Allah), not only for Islam, but for all the priceless gifts our lives have been blessed with. Look at some of them: the eyes we see with, the ears we hear with, the hands and the feet we work with, the air we breathe and the water we drink, without which life cannot even exist. We have not made them, nor could we, even if we wanted. We get them without asking, we have no inherent claims upon them nor any inalienable right to possess them They are all gifts of God's grace. Yet to retain them and to derive full benefit from them we must put in our best efforts.

Not much comes to us in life without endeavour or struggle. We gain only what we earn by our strivings: "We have created man into (a life of) trial and pain" (al-Balad 90:4). "And that nought shall be accounted unto man but what he has striven for" (al-Najm 53:39). The soil is there, the water is there, the seed is there; but the soil will not turn seeds into crops unless we dig it, plough it, sow the seeds, water the plants, protect them and harvest the crop. Without sweat and toil, the gifts of God that abound all around us will not yield their full treasures to us. Indeed the richer the treasures desired, the greater the efforts required.

Islam and Sacrifice

Islam is not just one gift among many; it is the choicest gift of God (al-Maidah 5:3). Out of all the countless bounties and the blessings that Allah has given us to enable us to live our lives in this world, the greatest and the most important is that He has guided us to the true meaning and purpose in our lives. That purpose and that meaning is to live for Him, to strive to seek His Pleasure, and even to die in His way. Instead of living like animals - being born, eating and drinking, procreating and dying we live a meaningful existence. Life is thus lifted up from being a transient, fleeting moment in history, terminable at death, to an eternal event. Our existence is no more directed to merely coveting and acquiring the blessings and bounties that abound in this-world. Instead the way is open to turn this-world's possessions into everlasting benefits to be reaped in that-world, sometimes by taking and enjoying them, gratefully, sometimes by giving them up.

If ordinary things in this world cannot be obtained without effort, obtaining meaning and purpose in life, which is Islam, must surely require utmost endeavor. The nature and magnitude of struggle, and of sacrifice, must be commensurate with the nature and value of the goal we want to reach.

And what purpose in life could be more valuable, more compelling, more important, and more urgent, than that of bringing the whole man - his inner personality, his environment, his society, the entire world - to the path of Allah. Without struggling hard, merely by wishing, desiring, professing, making claims and statements, how can we ever hope to reach the destination that we have set for ourselves? If one's daily bread cannot be earned without effort, will Allah give His greatest blessing - success in this life and success in the life to come - unless we prove that we deserve to receive it? Unless we demonstrate that our profession of faith is rooted in our hearts, that we are truthful in our claims of loyalty, that we are prepared to offer sacrifices required of us.

Says the Qur'an:

Do you think you should enter Paradise unless God establishes who among you have struggled hard and who are patient? (Al-Imran 3:142)

Do you think you should enter Paradise while there has not yet come upon you the like of those who passed away before you? Misery and hardship befell them (Al-Baqarah 2: 214)

Do the men think that on their [mere] saying 'We believe', they will be left to themselves, and will not be put to the test? We certainly put to the test those that were before them (Al-Ankabut 29:2-3)

Of course, this does not mean that our efforts and sacrifices can in any way match the gifts Allah gives to us; yet it is through our own labour that we get food from the earth; yet it is so priceless that the hard work put in by a farmer cannot be considered equivalent to the immense benefit that we derive. Similarly, whatever we are required to sacrifice in our struggle in the way of Allah is not measurable against the benefits that we shall personally derive, that the Muslim Ummah will collectively gain, that mankind as a whole will reap. Nevertheless we must prove, within our human limitations that we are prepared not only to profess our faith in our cause, but also prepared to struggle and sacrifice what we really love for that which we declare to be dearest to us. That is why, in the Qur'an, Iman is almost invariably bracketed with righteous deeds (al-'amal al-salih) and with Hijrah and Jihad. Indeed only those believers are declared to be truthful in their claims to faith who are certain and unwavering, who struggle in Allah's way with their lives and possessions (al-Hujurat 49:15).

Struggle, as we briefly mentioned before, is undertaken at two levels. At the personal level, Iman requires that one bring his self under Allah and obey Him; that one must therefore love Allah more than everything else: "The (true) believers love God more than all else" (al-Baqarah 2:165). Put differently, Iman requires that nothing is too worthy, nothing is too valuable to sacrifice in order to earn Allah's pleasure.

But it is at the collective level that struggle, and hence sacrifices, are required in order to summon the entire world to live under One God. Most often the Qur'an denotes the struggle in this sense as Jihad. Iman demands dethroning all false gods, standing up to all forces of evil, oppression and corruption. Jihad is required to subdue all forces in rebellion against God. It therefore requires sacrifices of a vastly different order and nature than those required to subdue one's Nafs (self).

Sacrifice and Inner Resources

Sacrifices contribute to the success of our struggle in two ways. Firstly, they strengthen our inner spiritual and moral resources and develop qualities of character which are essential to our struggle at every level. Secondly, they develop and reinforce cohesion and discipline within a collectivism, giving it the strength and resources to conduct Jihad at the wider social level.

Every act of sacrifice nourishes and increases your Iman; for it transforms a verbal confession and a mental conviction into a living reality. It confirms, and thus increases, your love for Allah; for at every step you give up something for the sake of this love (al-Imran 3:172-3). It reinforces your loyalty and fidelity to Allah; for all other loyalties become secondary as they are sacrificed for the sake of this loyalty. In short, sacrifices bring you nearer to Allah. The process is mutually interactive: the stronger the faith, the greater the will and capacity to sacrifice; the greater the sacrifices, the more internalized and deeper the faith.

Sacrifices are essential for the development of all moral qualities, but especially for the development of patience, endurance, perseverance, fortitude, resolve and determina tion. These can be summed up in just one word: Sabr. Every sacrifice reinforces the quality of sabr, making it grow in quality and strength. Sabr, in turn, sustains and increases the capacity to sacrifice. Again, the process is dialectic. All promises of help from Allah, all assurances of success in this-world and rewards in the Hereafter, have been made conditional upon the attainment of Iman and Sabr (al-Imran 3:139,125 ; al-Anfal 8:46 ; al-A'raf 7:137 ; al-Zumar 39:10).

Sacrifice and Collective Discipline

Sabr is a very comprehensive virtue. One of its many aspects is discipline. Discipline is closely related to sacrifice; they are in fact interdependent. In its comprehensive sense inclusive of self-discipline, spiritual and moral discipline, organisational and social discipline - it cannot be attained unless you are prepared to sacrifice things you love. Nor can you continuously offer sacrifice of things to which you assign some value without developing a discipline within you, an inner discipline. Though disciplined, collective life, too, plays no less important a role in reinforcing the spirit of sacrif ice. And sacrifice is equally essential for generating and sustaining such disciplined collective life. Let us briefly see why.

It is obvious that while walking on your personal way to God, you will need to attain to greater and greater heights of sacrifice and self-discipline to succeed in seeking His pleasure. But once you decide to come together with others to struggle together to bring the world under the lordship of its Creator, you stand in greater need of making

sacrifices. Without them, neither your organized collective struggle can take a durable shape and achieve necessary strength, nor can you aspire to be successful in your mission. "God loves those who, fighting in His way, join ranks as if they are a wall of molten lead", says the Qur'an (al-Saff 61:4). What a beautiful and meaningful parable. Strong and solid, fused and welded, impregnable and without cracks and fissures, that is how members of a Muslim community, joined, welded together, strive in the way of Allah.

Now, how is a wall built? It is built of many single building blocks, each with its own individuality. How do the blocks 'join ranks' to turn into a solid, strong and impregnable wall? One block goes over another, one sits by the side of another, and so the wall goes up as you start cementing them, gaining in strength and height at each step. The blocks may look so similar, as do human beings, yet each has an inner individuality of its own. No block is required to sacrifice this individuality. Indeed the richness and strength is gained by virtue of so many individualities coming together.
But as you build the wall, if each block is adamant to go its own way, if it is not prepared to carry the load which will come upon it from the top or give support to the blocks below it, if a block which is going into a corner is not prepared to be chiselled so that it can fit in its place, a strong wall will never be built. Many bricks will have to go into the foundations below the ground, never to be noticed by anyone after the building is finished. Yet they will be bearing the whole load, and without their sacrifice the building will not rise even above the ground. Many blocks will have to be broken, so that they can fit into a uniform wall.
Without some sacrifices on the part of each block a solid wall will never come to exist.

WHAT IS SACRIFICE?

Let us now look at what sacrifice means. What should we sacrifice? What sacrifices are more difficult to make? What sacrifices deserve to be called great?

The Two Types

Sacrifice, as we have seen, simply means to give up things which we love and hold dear, which in our eyes have some value for us. We may possess them now or hope and aspire to have them in future. The things may be tangible and concrete or intangible and abstract. Important among con crete things are time, money, worldly possessions, physical abilities, life. Important abstract things may include our ties of love and affection, especially familial, likes and dislikes, preferences and prejudices, views and opinions, desires and aspirations, pleasures and comforts, status and roles, or merely our ego.

Let me state here three basic principles which, in my view, are important to understand if we want to have a full understanding of sacrifice.

Firstly, giving up something deserves to be called a sacrifice only when we love and value it. Hence, it is difficult to draw a clear line of demarcation between the concrete and the abstract. In the final analysis, every sacrifice is a sacrifice of our love or value. When we give away money, or life, or a familial tie for the sake of Allah, what we realty give up, and that makes it a sacrifice, is our love for money, life or a relative, not the object itself.

Secondly, it is more difficult and more necessary to sacrifice abstract things rather than the concrete.

Thirdly, we can give up something we love and to which we attach value only for something we love more and to which we attach greater value.

Tangible Sacrifices

We need not dwell here for long upon the sacrifices of concrete things. We know, we realize and we recognize very well the need and importance of such sacrifices, even if we are at times unable or, quite often find it hard, to make them. But, once we dedicate ourselves to a cause, each one of them may be required to be given at its own time and place. Hence, we should pause to note certain of their more important characteristics.

Time

Time is our most precious commodity. Nothing we covet and desire in life can be obtained except by spending time, and spending it properly, in its pursuit. We maybe spending our time to seek pleasure, to earn money and worldly possessions, to work, to enjoy, or we may simply idle it away - doing nothing.

Time is the first thing that Allah demands of us. It takes time to fight in the way of Allah. It takes time to pray. It takes time to do Da'wah. It takes time to read the Qur'an. It takes time to visit the sick. Every moment should be spent in seeking His pleasure, in fulfilling our commitment to Him. But, if you reflect more deeply, you will realize that what you are really required to sacrifice is not your time. It is the things in whose pursuit your time is being spent, things which may be contradictory to your goals in life, meaningless, unimportant or less important compared to Allah's cause. Therefore to give your time for Islam, before anything else, you must be ready to sacrifice many other things which claim your time.

How can you bring yourself to sacrifice these things and devote your time to Allah? Remember that time is one thing you cannot hold on to even for a moment. It must continuously slip away from you, in whatever way you choose to spend it. Its value to you is simply what you gain from it. Time will melt away, what you earn will stay.

Remain ever-conscious that every moment in time, depending on how you choose to spend it, will turn into either eternal bliss or an endless misery. Remembering this will strengthen you most in sacrificing your time. The moments you cannot hold on to today will return to you tomorrow, never to go away. Why should you not sacrifice earning something which you will only find turning into a never-ending misery and remorse?

So, while time passes by, reckon deeply: what are you gaining - something transient or something abiding? Will it be a remorse or a joy? What preference has Islam in your time? What proportion of it is devoted to Allah? "Let every person look to what he has forwarded for the morrow" (al-Hashr 59:18).

Sacrificing time for the sake of Allah is the essence of Islam: whenever summoned, you must respond. Hence you should continuously train yourself to give up everything by giving your time to the cause of Allah. Five times a day this quality is ingrained in your character. On Fridays, you have been instructed thus to respond: "O Believers! When the call to Prayer is sounded on the day of Congregation, hasten to God's remembrance and leave all worldly commerce. This is for your own good, if you but knew it" (al-Jumu'ah 62:9).

Worldly Possessions and Money

Most of your time is spent in the pursuit of money or worldly possessions obtained through money. Their desire and love is ingrained in our nature. "Alluring unto man is the love of worldly desires - women and children and heaped up treasures of gold and silver, and horses of high mark, and cattle, and lands" (al-Imran 3:14).

This love and desire of worldly things, let us remember, is neither condemnable nor even bad or evil. The world is not inherently evil; such is not the teaching of the Qur'an. Money and wealth are not despised; it is called the khayr (good). And quite logically. For the path to Allah, and to the other-worldly blessings, passes through this-world. If we abandon this-world, we have nothing left by which to gain those priceless treasures. Hence, indeed, it is the only source and basis of gaining Allah's pleasure and the other-world.

What makes this-world evil is when we forget that all this has been placed at our disposal for the duration of this-world only, as a means to real and eternal goals, which are better than anything whatever and everything this-world may have to offer. When means become ends, they bring misery by diverting us away from what is of real value to us. The above quoted Qur'anic verse, therefore, continues:

All this may be enjoyed in the life of this world; but God - with Him is the best of all goals. Say: Shall I tell you of something better than that? For the God-con scious there are, with their Lord, gardens through which running waters flow, therein to dwell forever, and spouses pure, and God's good pleasure . . . (al-Imran 3:14-15)
Worldly possessions are not easy things to give away in the way of Allah; so many falter and fail when confronted with real choices. What will help you to offer these difficult sacrifices is to constantly remember certain things.

Firstly, nothing belongs to you; everything belongs to Allah. When you sacrifice something in the way of Allah, you are only returning it to the rightful Owner. "To God belongs everything in the heavens and the earth."

Secondly, whatever great value you may attach to worldly possessions, these will become naught with your last breath.
All that is with you comes to an end; but what is with God is everlasting (al-Nahl 16:96)
And tell them the parable of the life of this world: it is like water which We send down from the skies, and the plants of the earth absorb it; but [in time] they turn into straw which the winds scatter; and God is Omnipotent over everything. [Remember] wealth and children are the adornment of this world's life . . (al-Kahf 18:45-6)

Thirdly, only by giving it away for Allah can you receive it back, increased manifold. Lend unto God a goodly loan. Whatever good you shall forward on your own behalf, you shall find it with God, as better and richer in reward (al-Muzzammil 73:20)

The parable of those who spend their possessions in the way of God is that of a grain out of which grow seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains . . .
(al-Baqarah 2:261)

Think for a while: What worth can your claims of committment to Islam have if you spend more money on meaningless pleasures, like smoking and eating, than on your cause? Of what value is your faith in the promises of Allah, when the slightest hope of profit in this world makes you invest all your savings in a business transaction, but the promise of at least seven hundred-fold return, never to be taken away, cannot force your purse-strings open? You may measure what place Islam occupies in your life by looking at what proportion of your wealth you spend in the way of Allah.

Sacrificing wealth has never been easy. But ours is an age when a better standard of living, enjoyment and pleasure, consumerism and material gains have become the only objects of life. Hence you should watch carefully lest you fail in this respect.

Life

A time may come when you will be required to sacrifice your life for the sake of Allah. To so lay down your life is the highest act of doing shahadah; you then deserve to be called shahid. Life is your most precious possession. To sacrifice it means you have to sacrifice everything which life gives or makes possible, all concrete and abstract things that have been mentioned earlier.

You can indeed become eager to die in the way of Allah as soon as you realize that your life does not belong to you but to Him, and you must render to Him what is His due. You should also remember that death you can never escape or avoid, that it will always come at the appointed hour and place, in the appointed manner (al-Imran 3:185, 144-5, 154-6 ; al-Nisaa 4:78). You should also know that those who die in the way of Allah attain a life, for themselves and their community and their mission, which transcends their death: "And say not of those slain in God's way, "They are dead"; Nay, they are alive but you perceive it not."(al-Baqarah 2:154)

Let there be no love of this world, let there be no fear death.

Only then can you attain the strength necessary to sacrifice your life. Only by being ready to die can you overwhelm hostile forces. Only then the door of success shall open. By dying you attain life, both for yourself and for the community. Unless you are prepared to die you forfeit the right to live especially as a community.

Not that everyone of us will be called upon to give away his life. But the yearning to do so must burn in every heart. "One who does not fight or even thinks of fighting in the way of Allah will die the death of a hypocrite", said the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him (Muslim). He also said: "By Him in whose hands is my life, I love that I die in the way of Allah and made alive, that I die again and again given life, I again die and once again given life, only to die again in the way of Allah." (Bukhari, Muslim)

Intangible Sacrifices

Time, money, life and other similar things are no doubt hard to sacrifice. But they have some aspects by virtue of being concrete and tangible, which ease the hardship in giving them up. You can objectify what you are required to sacrifice. You also have the satisfaction of seeing with your eyes what you have given away. Moreover, such sacrifices, when of some great magnitude, are usually called forth in moments of crises. A moment of crisis has its own logic and urgency, which inspires and compels one to bring out his best. At such a moment, you are conscious of the situation, you realize the urgency of need, you are emotively over-whelmed. Also such sacrifices are primarily of a personal nature, offered by personal choice, which does not usually involve a complex network of inter-personal relations.

It is the sacrifice of things which are intangible and abstract in their nature which is not only more difficult to make, more important for the individual and the collectivism, more necessary for success in a struggle, but also more likely to be overlooked or ignored. More often than not they are not even considered to be worth making a sacrifice of. Abstract things may be ignored as objects of sacrifice because they are rooted in heart and mind, they are not objectifiable, sacrificing them is not a visible act. They are to be sacrificed unobserved and unnoticed, in everyday life, and not in the heat of the moment.

Living together and undertaking struggle In the cause of Allah requires such sacrifices. They are of such a nature that hardly ever will you feel that you are required to make them that such objects are worth making a sacrifice. But without such sacrifices, no strong, cohesive collective life can come into being and no struggle can be made with some hope of success. For example, take your likes and dislikes. They cannot be weighed like money, but you have to sacrifice your likes and dislikes that you hold for persons, for objects, for opinions. Such intangible things in fact may require a greater spirit of sacrifice. In the cause of Allah one has to give up not only his life and money and time and resources, but also his inner likes and dislikes, his love and hatred. The Prophet said: "One who loves for the sake of Allah alone and makes enmity for the sake of Allah alone. . . he perfects his Iman" (Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi).

When we refer to the Sahabah we usually say: Allah was well-pleased with them, they well-pleased with Him (radiyallahu anhum wa radu anhu). Why? It means that they had submerged their entire personality in the Will of Allah, to the extent that they liked what Allah liked and they disliked what Allah disliked. They gave away not only their lives and their properties for the sake of Allah, but their whole personality.

This is one important type of sacrifice that we usually neglect and without which it is extremely difficult to form that united and bonded collectivism which alone can further the cause of Allah. Let us have a closer look at some of them. They include, as said earlier, things like love and hate relationships, likes and dislikes, preferences and prejudices, desires and motives, pleasures and comforts, hopes and expectations, habits and customs, values and attitudes, status and roles, or merely the ego.

Familial Love

Familial love is the strongest and the most predominant relationship that we have in this world. From childhood till death, love for parents and children, for husbands and wives, for brothers and sisters, even for other relations, remains at the centre of our lives, it dominates all our concerns. We usually live and work and acquire worldly possessions for the sake of love and responsibility to them.

It is quite normal for us to consider its claim upon our heart and mind, upon our attention and loyalty, upon our time and wealth as prior to every other claim. The familial bonds of affection bind us to themselves as no other bonds do. So often we hear someone saying 'my family has the first claim upon me' or someone taking pride in being 'totally devoted and loyal to his or her family'.

And for good reason. Family is the oldest and most important human institution. It is the bedrock of all civilization and culture that man has built up. Without such deep and pervasive love and such overriding loyalty it would never succeed in fulfilling the role of transmitting civilizational values, norms and mores, or making them secure and stable. Without family man, as man, will perish.

Why then, should you be required to sacrifice familial love in the way of Allah? For obvious reasons.

Firstly, you cannot bring your own self wholly under Allah unless His claim upon your life, love and loyalty becomes the most urgent and important. Hence familial love must be subordinated to God. Otherwise it is likely to force or tempt a believer to behave in a manner contrary to the demands of God.

Secondly, family is always the strongest bastion wherein lie entrenched the established values, beliefs, customs and way of life. Becoming Muslim means you begin to change yourselves and your society. You begin to challenge and overthrow the established way of life. That the first resistance to change and rebellion against the ways of forefathers should be offered within the precincts of family love is quite natural.

Thirdly, you commit yourselves to undertake Jihad with all that you possess. Its claim upon everything you have must override every other claim, including the claim of family love. Nothing should deflect you from the path of Jihad. Family love, even if it is not an impediment, you may have to sacrifice in many ways in order to fulfil your duty.

The Qur'an therefore tells us:

And know that your wealth and your children are but a trial, and that with God is a tremendous reward (al-Anfal 8:28).
And confronts us with a profound, fundamental question: Whom do you love more? Allah or . . . ?

Say: If your fathers and your sons and your brothers and your spouses and your clan and your possessions that you have acquired and the commerce that you fear

may slacken, and the dwellings you love - if these are dearer to you than God and His Messenger and to struggle in His way, then wait till God brings (the fulfilment of) His Command; God guides not the rebellious people (al-Tawbah 9:24).

The sacrifice of familial love may take various shapes depending on how it stands in the way of obeying Allah and striving to seek His pleasure. In the first instance, familial love demands obedience to parents, to elders, to the ways of forefathers or customs and society. Such obedience, if contrary to the demands of obedience to Allah, you must give up. You must abide by your reason, your conscience, your faith, the guidance you have received from God.

And when it is said to them, 'Follow what God has sent down', they say 'No, but we will follow only that which we found our forefathers doing.' Why, even if their forefathers did not use their reason and if they were not guided? (al-Baqarah 2:170).

We have enjoined upon man goodness towards his parents, yet (even so) should they endeavor with you to make you associate with that whereof you have no knowledge, then do not obey them . . . (al-Ankabut 29:8).

Further, those whom you love may simply refuse to believe in what you believe. Or, they may embark upon open hostility to Allah and His cause. Such hostile relatives may strive to suppress the voice of truth, mock and ridicule you, persecute you, drive you away from your homes, eliminate you.

You should sacrifice all feelings and ties of love with such inimical and hostile family members. Love for Allah and love for His enemies cannot go together. Only by offering the maximum sacrifice of totally renunciation love for them can you have faith engraved on your heart, be counted among the 'Party of God' (Hizb-Allah), receive the rewards of Paradise and His good pleasure.

You shall not find any people who [truly] believe in God and the Last Day and who [at the same time] are loving anyone who opposes God and His Messenger - even though they were their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their clan. Those - He has engraved faith upon their hearts, and He has strengthened them with inspiration from Himself; and He shall admit them into gardens through which running waters flow, therein to dwell forever. God is well pleased with them; and they are well-pleased with Him. They are God's party . . . (al-Mujadalah 58:22).

Like Ibrahim, that paragon of sacrifice in the way of Allah: First, he had to repudiate his father and even forgo his desire to seek Allah's forgiveness for him. Later, he had to demonstrate his willingness to sacrifice his son.

And Ibrahim's prayer that his father be forgiven was but due to a promise he had made to him, but when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of God, he disavowed him; Ibrahim was most tender-hearted, most clement (al-Tawbah 9:114).

Or, like Nuh: His heart cried out for his son who was drowned in front of his eyes: "O my Lord, my son was of my family, and Your promise is surely true?" But, once

told that 'he was not of your family, it was a deed not righteous', he willingly agreed not even to make a plea in this regard (Hud 11:45-6).

Or, like Lot: He forsook his wife because her sympathies lay with the people who refused to heed his call to surrender to Allah alone.

Or, like the Companions of the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him: Fathers were arrayed against sons, and sons against fathers, even on battlegrounds, but flinch they did not.

Those who simply refuse to believe but are not actively hostile require a different sort of sacrifice. You should give up your friendship with them, but treat them with kindness and justice. Snapping all ties of love is an ultimate act, but the plunge has to be taken once only. Continually to live with relatives who disagree with you or dislike your ways and make no secret of it - may be more difficult, even greater sacrifice. For while your activities and beliefs may be disparaged, hurting you deeply, you are still to treat them with compassion.

Obey them not [your parents who strive to make you indulge in shirk]; but keep them company in this world with kindness (Luqman 31:15).

Not always will your family members be opposed or indifferent to your life-mission; they may be sympathetic. Even so demands made by their love may be in conflict with or different from the demands placed upon you by Allah. In situations like this, do not remain unmindful of the fact that love for even those who are good Muslims may some times tempt you away from the path of your love for Allah Hence the need for sacrifice may still be there.

Often you will be under subtle pressures of various sorts. Resisting them will require continuing sacrifices in man ways. Choices, in all cases,may not be that simple and obvious. Sometimes their dislike and disapproval will be made plain to you, explicitly or implicitly; you will have to disregard them. Sometimes pleas and demands will be made in the name of love, rights, or authority, all finding sanction in Islam; you will have to resist them in a proper manner. Wives and children will ask to be loved and cared for; you will have to strike a balance.

You will, then, have to subdue to your commitment to Allah your desire to please them, not to hurt them, not to disappoint them, not to fail their expectations. Or, you will have to forgo their support and approval, your need for warmth and affection. You will have to make complex choices as to the points beyond which your obligation to serve, to discharge your duties, to obey, will have to be abandoned, if they become an impediment in your way to Allah.

Friendships

Friendships constitute another major area of inter-personal relations of love and affection. Friendships are formed round common temperaments, interests, pursuits and goals. As Muslims you have only one goal and one pursuit: 'one who surrenders his whole being to God'. Hence many friendships you will have to sacrifice. Equally significantly, many enmities and dislikes you will have to put an end to. Conversely,

you will have to make new friendships: someone you may have always disliked may find a place in your heart and become dear to you.

Whether they be familial relations or friendships, social relations serve a vital need. They provide you the necessary strength and reinforcement by their approval and support. You will have to sacrifice such vital social support as relations are disrupted, approval is withdrawn if not replaced by positive disapproval, long-standing friendships are broken. Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, the respected leader and the Trustworthy, immediately became the 'mad- man', the 'fanatic', the 'enemy of people'.

Like friendship, your likes and dislikes, like your relations, dominate every part of your life. They extend to views and opinions, taste and temperament, feelings and emotions, attitudes and behaviours. Each in its own way needs to be sacrificed at times.

Views and Opinions

Your own views and opinions are always very dear to you. Your feelings of attachment to your views only grow stronger once you have become committed to a purpose in life, to a world-view. Then you develop a strong sense of right and wrong, truth and falsehood. More importantly, you often think that there can be only one way to look at things: either right or wrong, with your own view always being right. However, your own views - on a particular matter, strategy, way of doing things - may not find acceptance by others. You may then be required to forgo them, withdraw them, or even act against them. Unless you view something as a clear matter of violating Allah's injunction, you must sacrifice your views. This may be more important for strengthening collective life than the sacrifice of wealth.

Feelings and Emotions

Your feelings and emotions are equally dear to you. At times you must give up doing things you find you are not doing for the sake of Allah alone, even if you like them and find them attractive and useful; at other times, you must involve yourself in things you do not like doing, which are against your temperament, only because they please Allah.

At times you should suppress your urge to speak, and fall silent, even if that urge is compulsive; at times you may have to overcome your desire to remain silent, and speak up. You may feel anger rising up in you, an urge to revenge, to speak evil - yet you must hold your tongue.

At times you may prefer solitude and quiet, yet you may have to plunge into intense social activities and contacts; at others, you may very much want to mix socially, but you may have to withdraw into solitude.

You may aspire to be 'something' or 'somebody'; those aspirations may have to be totally abandoned. Your ambitions, your plans, may need to be scrapped.

Taste and Temperament

Even in very mundane affairs you will be required to sacrifice your taste and temperament. You will have to live, eat, sleep and dress in ways which may not be to your liking, to your taste or in harmony with your life-style and preferences. You must accept them, and accept them without grumbling, willingly, without hurting others, causing inconvenience or disruption.

Ego

And, finally, your ego, your self-esteem, your image of your own self, your love of this image. Sometimes hidden, sometimes open, it lies at the root of so many evils. To annihilate 'self' may be a desirable station on a mystic's path, but on the path of the prophets of God, the only thing required is to surrender your ego to the will of God. Our self-esteem becomes so important to us that it breeds obstinacy, stubbornness, obduracy, contempt of others. To sacrifice it becomes one of the most difficult acts in life, but it has to be done.

Continual Sacrifices

Some great sacrifices are such as are made once in life, like that of life. Some are very minor but must be made continuously. Their continuing nature makes them important because of many intangible aspects. Firstly, they require you to be ever-alert and watchful lest opportunities come and find you napping, indifferent, unmindful or unable to recognize them. Secondly, they require a steady and constant will, which requires a greater effort to maintain it. Thirdly, they are too small to qualify as acts of heroism. But they are no less effective for character-building, social organization and success. Even a drop of water falling steadily and persistently may make a hole in a rock. Fourthly, they are not called forth in moments of crisis; rather they must be made in the ordinary run of daily living. Despite being minor in nature, this makes them harder to offer. For faced with a great challenge, under an acute crisis, looking forward to an immense reward, it is always easier to summon all your inner resources, to summon the greatest will, to offer the best. Such is human nature.

In a way we are required to make small, very small, sacrifices every moment in life. For at every step and every moment we are faced with a choice - however small - to go one way or to go the other way. Every choice made to please Allah means taking a decision to sacrifice something. Even, as you choose to offer Fajr (morning) Prayer, you sacrifice your sleep and the warmth of your bed.

Driving on a road where there are high hills, deep ravines, steep slopes, sharp bends and twists, you are more likely to be cautious, to drive safely, to negotiate your way through all the difficulties. But on a road which is even and uneventful, with no bends and twists to negotiate, no obstacles to surmount, no slopes to climb up and down, you are more likely to become carefree and unmindful. Thus you are likely to involve yourself in an accident, or miss your opportunities, or lose your way, or be unheedful of what is required of you.

There are sacrifices to be made in regular day to day living - in home, in work place, in market, in social contact, in organizational work, even in privacy - which are likely

to be missed. They are more difficult to make simply because they are not even recognized as suitable stuff for sacrifice.

Without Prospects of Success

Sacrifices made when prospects of worldly success are not in sight have an extra dimension to them. When your efforts seem likely to bear fruit, it is much easier to give time, money and life, to withdraw your opinion, to work with persons whom you dislike, much easier to adopt courses you person ally disapprove of. But when such prospects are bleak or non-existent, all these acts become extremely difficult. In moments of despondency, with no victory in sight, or with defeat looming large - one is more lkely to cling to his time and money, to insist on his opinion and view, to make an issue of his dislike of certain persons and actions. Yet the reward for sacrifice made in such moments is much greater.

Not equal is he among you who spent, and who fought, before the victory; those are higher in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards (al-Hadid 57:10).

HOW TO SACRIFICE?

How to draw from within yourselves the inner resources which would generate, nourish and sustain your spirit and capacity to sacrifice? How can you become, and remain, willing and prepared to offer sacrifices required of you?

You have come to know some of the ways while we have been discussing various types of sacrifices. There are, how ever, certain fundamental inner resources which need to be emphasized and remembered, which you must try to generate within yourselves.

But first let us recapitulate certain basic principles on which these resources depend. One, a sacrifice is a sacrifice only when you give up something which you love or value or desire. You can give it up only for the sake of something which you love more or value and desire more, or which is more important or urgent to you. Two, whatever the outer form of sacrifice - time, wealth, life, likes and dislikes, opinions - what you really sacrifice is the love and value you attach to it, and not the form. Three, you will therefore become more willing and pre pared to offer a sacrifice in the way of Allah as your love for Allah and His rewards increases in depth, intensity and strength and as the value you attach to the objects of sacrifice diminishes in your sight.

Love for Allah

Thus love lies at the root of everything. You can therefore realize what you need most to help you gain the inner strength necessary for offering sacrifices. It is your love for Allah. How much do you love him? Do you love Him more than everything else?

That is why the Qur'an says: 'The [true] believers love God more than all else' (al-Baqarah 2:165). That is why it confronts every Muslim with one simple but profound question: Whom do you love more? Allah, His Messenger and Jihad in His way, or fathers, sons, wives, brothers, wealth, houses, commerce, careers? (al-Tawbah 9: 24). Only with such love for Allah will sacrifice turn into an inner urge,rather than remaining a motion of compliance with an external exhortation. Then you will derive

the true delight and pleasure in fulfilling the demands of Iman. Remember: there are two types of Iman. One remains on our lips and that is the Iman which becomes a burden to us. There is another Iman which penetrates into the heart that is the Iman which becomes a pleasure, a delight, a joy. Once you have this Iman, if you are required to give time, money, life or sacrifice,likes and dislikes, opinions, you do it gladly. The Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, said: 'There are three things, only the one who has them will taste the sweetness of Iman: [first of them is] that Allah and His Messenger he loves more than any other thing beside them . . .' (Bukhari, Muslim).

How to attain love for Allah which exceeds every other love? There are not, and cannot be, any precise formula for this purpose. But a few things will help. And each in turn will become a rich inner resource you will need to fulfill the demands of sacrificing.

Remembering Allah

Remember how He has created you, provided you with everything you need; how infinitely Merciful He is. Look at your existence, look at the universe around you, and everywhere you will see His mercy and care, His wisdom and majesty. As you reflect and ponder over 'His signs', which are everywhere, your love for Him will increase.
Part of remembering Him is to turn to Him and seek His help in loving Him. The Prophet, blessings and peace be On him, has taught us many ways of doing so. Two are:

I ask of Thee, Allah, Thy love, love of those who love Thee, and the (doing of) deeds which may bring Thy love to me. Make my love for Thee greater than my love for myself, for my wealth, for my family, for cold water1 (Tirmidhi, Muslim).

Allah, make Thy love greater than every other love, Thy fear greater than every other fear. Make my eagerness to meet Thee cut across all my worldly desires. Place my pleasure in worshipping Thee while Thou gives the worldly their pleasure in this world.
Remembering Him as often as you can is essential and fundamental. It will help you not only to attain love, but all other resources you need to develop your spirit and capacity of sacrifice: mindful of living in His presence, attaching real value to meeting Him and receiving His rewards, understanding the worth and place of this-worldly life, grateful and humble before Him, fearful of never having done enough, prepared and willing to obey His commands.

Living in His Presence

Live as if you are in His presence. Remember that 'He is with you wherever you may be' (al-Hadid 57:4). When you are called upon to make a sacrifice, or you prepare to make it of your own accord, remember that you are before His eyes. That is what He asks us to be mindful of: 'Surely you are before Our eyes' (al-Tur 52:48).
Coupled with your conviction that whatever you are sacrificing belongs to the One who is seeing you, and His reward would be manifold and eternal, this should give you some measure of that inner urge and streng th essential to you.

This consciousness of being in His presence, of His Eyes being upon us, of Him listening to us, of doing our duty as our Master is with us, praising us generously, rewarding us kindly, is a prime source for creating the spirit of sacrifice. This also creates trust in Him, because once you know that you are with Him, you can entrust all your affairs to Him.

Meeting Allah

Every one of us has to die (al-Imran 3:185). Death is not the end of everything, it is only a transition into the next phase. In that phase we will stand face to face with Allah.

None of us likes to die; it is only human. But die we must, and only after death will the doors open to eternal life and blessings. If you understand the nature and reality of this-worldly life, if you know that you can receive your fair wages only upon meeting Allah, then you will develop two feelings. One, a desire to meet Him, however you may fear Him on account of your own misdeeds. Two, the preparedness to sacrifice everything that belongs to this-world for what you will earn in reward in the Hereafter.

One of the du'as the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, used to make says:
Allah! Grant me the delight of looking at Thy noble face and a longing to meet Thee (Nasa'i, Ahmad, Hakim).

Grateful and Humble

Whatever the nature of sacrifice, and whether big or small tangible or intangible, offer it in gratitude and humility. It so often happens that one begins to get weary and tired of giving in the way of Allah. One, then, begins to say, 'We have already spent so much time; we have already given so much money; how much more shall we give?; we have already made so many sacrifices; what else is required of us?' This will happen only if you are making sacrifices not to please Allah alone; but then you are motivated by something else. Or, when you do not realize that you should indeed be grateful to Him for every opportunity you get to offer some sacrifice. Also offer every sacrifice in all humility.

Let us be very clear that whatever things you sacrifice, you do not give it to some person, nor to some organization. Nor do you give it to Allah, though He is Merciful and Generous enough to say that whatever you give is a loan to Him, which shall be repaid manifold. You give everything to yourselves. Does one ever get tired of giving more and more to himself?
Now this is not selfishness. It only means that we believe that our ultimate prosperity lies in submission to the will of Allah. Through sacrifice we seek our betterment in this life and we desire a successful, eternal life in the Hereafter. At the same time, every sacrifice we make, everything we give in the way of Allah, makes our community stronger.

Therefore be grateful to Allah for having given you the opportunity to sacrifice, for having called upon you to serve Him, for having blessed you with the ability to offer something in His way. Things might have been otherwise. We might have been left

wandering astray: we might not have been given the opportunity to sacrifice wealth and thus reap eternal reward. You should therefore give every sacrifice in the spirit of gratitude. To Him you should look for acceptance.

And also humility. You should never have the feeling of having done enough. Once the disease creeps into your heart that you have done enough, then all is lost. You should always think that whatever sacrifice you may offer, it is still nothing compared to the obligations you have to discharge towards Allah.

Being fearful of never having given away enough is very fundamental to your sacrifice. The Qur'an says: 'They give what they give, but their hearts tremble' (al-Mu'minun 23:60).

Inner Urge

The primary motivating force that drives you to make sacrifices must lie inside your own self. The urge should come from within The roots must lie deep in heart and soul. Neither group approval, nor conformity, nor organizational discipline, nor any other external pressure, should provide the compulsion to come forward with your sacrifice. Each one of them is important and has an important role to play in shaping our conduct. But if sacrifices are offered for any reason other than Allah's pleasure, it would be extremely difficult to offer large sacrifices, or offer them continually, under all circumstances. The will and spirit to sacrifice must be internalized.

Willing Choice

Choice to sacrifice should be made willingly. This means that you should, by your own choice, come forward to offer whatever you can to secure Allah's pleasure. Your will should harmonize with His will.

This does not mean that one should not feel any pain or discomfort while making a sacrifice. Once you give up your love or your desire or your value, to feel pain is only human. Indeed, if you feel no pain in giving up something, that giving up may not be worth being called a sacrifice. You are throwing away something which is of no value to you. Rather, the greater the pain, the greater the worth of the sacrifice. But pain ought to be followed by contentment; contentment for having given up something you considered valuable for Allah's pleasure which is really the most valuable, for having willingly borne pain for the sake of your love for Allah which supersedes every other love.

Two Basic Aids

We have been given two basic aids to help us develop all those inner resources which I have put before you. I can only mention them in passing, for each deserves to be treated in detail in its own right.
O Believers! Seek help with Sabr and Salat (al-Baqarah 2:153).

What is Salat? Salat of course is a ritual worship. It consists of certain physical postures. It also consists of certain words which we utter from beginning to end. But

the whole purpose of Salat is to remember and to be conscious of Allah. This is what the Qur'an very clearly states: 'Establish Prayer to remember Me' (Ta Ha 20:14).

What is sabr? It is very comprehensive in meaning. Literally sabr means to bind and restrain. In the Qur'an it encompasses qualities as wide as restraint and resolve, patience and the will to sacrifice, discipline and steadfastness. It binds you to your pledge to Allah, to your brothers, to your good in the Hereafter.

Hold on to Salat and sabr and you will gain the strength you need to offer sacrifices.

Two Models

Let us, finally, look at two models of sacrifice.

One is Ibrahim: He was tried and tested in every conceivable way. His father, his family, the priestly and political powers all were opposed to Him. He forsook them. He was thrown in the fire. He was banished from his home. He wandered through deserts and forests. And, ultimately, he put the knife on the throat of his son.

This was perhaps the most difficult thing to do. It involved not only the sacrifice of a beloved son; it asked for the sacrifice of a recognized basic human ethics. Yet, in final analysis, all ethics and morality are rooted in God's Will. Pleasing Him is the ultimate criterion. But, of course, only a Messenger in direct communication with God can be in a position to override an ethics laid down by God and Him this extreme sacrifice. Each one of us, however, may at times, have to suspend his 'personal' ethical judgement in the face of a clear injunction from Allah.

Only after offering all these sacrifices, and the ultimate sacrifice, was Ibrahim proclaimed as the 'leader of mankind'.

And when his Lord tested Ibrahim by various commandments and he fulfilled all of them, He said, Behold, I make you a leader of mankind (al-Baqarah 2:124).

If we profess and proclaim that we stand for a revival of Islam, where Islam will be the leader of all mankind, then we should, individually and collectively, follow and emulate; that noble model of Ibrahim.

The second model is that of the Prophet Muhammad blessings and peace be on him. Whether it was in the valley of Makkah where thorns were laid in his path or in the valley of Taif where stones were thrown at him, on the battlefield of Uhud where he lost his teeth or in the streets of Madina where his enemies raised all sorts of slanderous campaigns and propaganda against him, he has left for us the best examples of sacrifice. So did his followers and Companions.

Root Principles

Sacrifice, as we saw earlier, primarily means slaughter of an animal. To remember the examples of Ibrahim and Muhammad you sacrifice an animal each year on the day

after Hajj; Hajj itself being a worship rite which incorporates the most intense and sustained sacrifices. Here we must remember two important lessons.

One: What finds acceptance with God is not the sacrificial animal, but our willingness and preparedness to sacrifice, His love in our hearts, our obedience to Him. Never lose sight of this root principle; never be content with 'form' without spirit; nor,though, ever give up forms.

The flesh of them shall not reach God, neither their blood, but godliness from you shall reach Him (al-Hajj 22:37).

Two: The supreme sacrifice is the sacrifice of life. By giving away your physical life in the way of Allah, you die once. And that is the ultimate sacrifice. But you are required to die every day and every moment as you overcome your deeply-rooted loves, as you offer yourself totally to God, as you obey Him against all opposition from within and without. Thus you lay down your life, not just once, but again and again. That is the supreme sacrifice.

Say: My Prayer and my sacrifice, my living and my dying belong to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds (al-An'am 6:162).

CONCLUSION

Let me say, in conclusion, that all sacrifices are required of us because we have to shoulder the immense responsibility of fulfilling the mission that Allah's Messengers were charged with: 'That you be witnesses unto mankind.' We must be true slaves of our Lord, and be selfless servants of mankind. It is to serve mankind that we have been constituted into a Ummah. That calling requires that we prepare ourselves for one of the most difficult tasks in life.

Without making sacrifices the revival of Islam will always remain a matter of speeches or a matter of dreams. To actualize it, we will have to give up our time and wealth, our life and resources, our personal likes and dislikes.

Even our best efforts, however, may not be perfect. We may waver and falter, we may fail and despair. But this is only human. What Allah looks at is our intention and effort. So let us turn to Him to help us lest our human frailties overwhelm us when sacrifices are demanded of us, and to seek His forgiveness for all our shortcomings and failures.

Our Lord! Take us not to task if we forget, or make mistakes.

Our Lord! Lay not upon us a burden such as Thou didst lay upon those before us.

Our Lord! Do Thou not burden us beyond what we have strength to bear.

And pardon us, and forgive us, and have mercy on us.

Thou art our Master; help us, then, against people who deny the truth.
(al-Baqarah 2: 286)

This booklet has been developed from a short speech given at the time of the Friday Prayer, at the West Coast Conference of the Muslim Students Association in Los Angeles, USA in July 1979.



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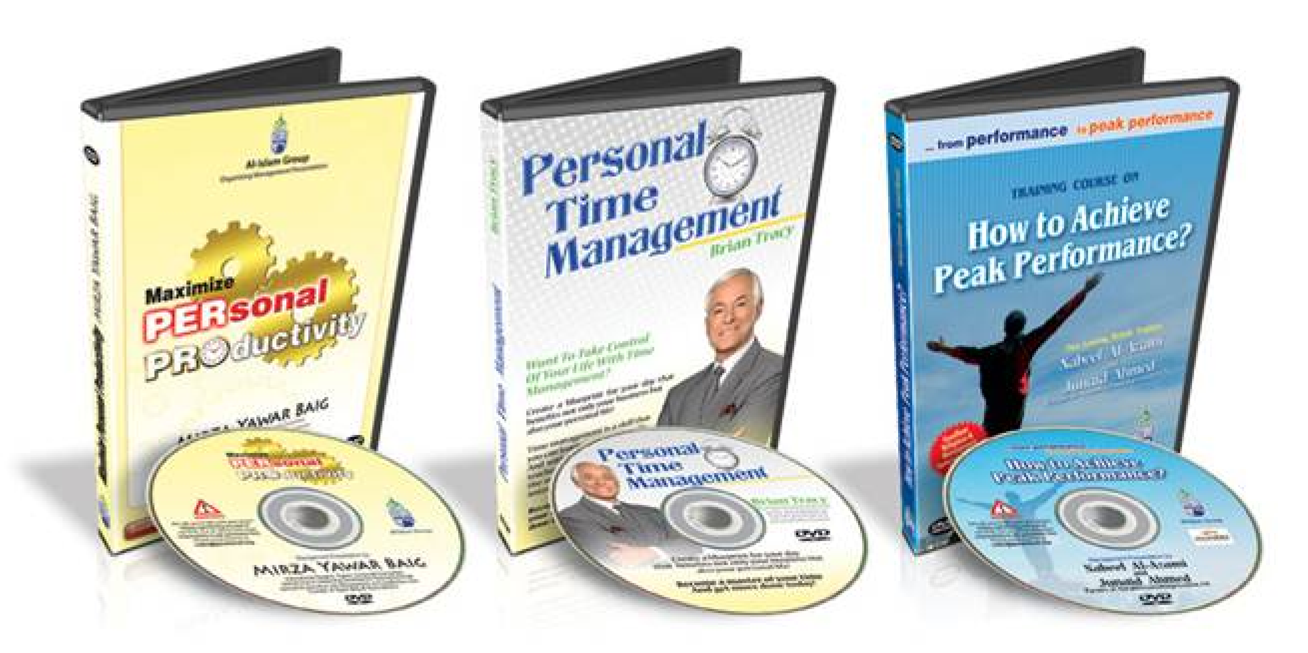


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